

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

245 McKee Road | Dover, DE 19904 | Office: 302.857.5232 | jason.miller@delaware.gov

DOC provides update on its COVID-19 mitigation efforts at Sussex Correctional Institution

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction continues to aggressively test, trace, clean and treat to combat inmate COVID-19 cases at Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI) in Georgetown. [Last week the DOC announced that after six weeks with no inmates testing positive for COVID-19 in any of the state's correctional facilities, a cluster of inmate cases was identified at SCI,](#) the first inmate cases at that facility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Every inmate at SCI is being tested as part of our comprehensive COVID-19 mitigation efforts at that facility, and because the illness is present in several housing units we know that the number of positive test results will grow," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "Three-quarters of the COVID-positive inmates have no symptoms of illness, and thanks to our proactive testing we are identifying these inmates early. We are prepared to isolate and treat every COVID-positive inmate, in collaboration with our correctional healthcare provider. We are activating a COVID-19 Treatment Center at SCI this week and are continuing to work aggressively to contain and eradicate the illness at that facility."

Last week, after three inmates at SCI showed symptoms of COVID-19 infection and tested positive for the illness, the DOC immediately initiated contact tracing to identify, isolate and proactively test individuals who came into sustained contact with these inmates. After new inmate test results were received, additional mitigation measures were implemented on top of DOC's existing rigorous COVID protocols, including:

- All inmates in the housing units in which the COVID-positive inmates had been assigned were quarantined and began receiving twice-daily temperature checks, screenings for symptoms and pulse oxygen level testing.
- All SCI inmates (nearly 900 in total) were issued face masks.
- All SCI inmates are being tested for the illness. **Testing was prioritized for inmates over 60 years of age and those with underlying health conditions, and three dozen SCI inmates over 60 and those with underlying health conditions who have tested negative for COVID-19 are being moved to a vacant housing building at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center to keep them in a COVID-free environment.**
- In-person visitation at SCI was suspended as a precaution to protect inmates and staff from transmission of the illness.

- All programming was temporarily suspended in an effort to restrict movement across the facility. Inmates are continuing to be provided recreation time, including in outside recreation areas.
- Voluntary COVID-19 testing is being offered to all SCI staff.
- Additional deep cleanings are being conducted, including decontamination of housing units with specialized fogging machines.
- SCI is not accepting any new commits on a temporary basis.

As of July 8, 122 inmates have active COVID-19 infection, **including 95 who are asymptomatic of illness** and 27 who are symptomatic. 119 are from SCI and 3 are from Morris Community Corrections Center (MCCC) in Dover. Preliminary indications suggest the MCCC inmates who tested positive this week can be traced to inmates who had recently arrived from SCI and tested positive for COVID-19 while being quarantined during intake. 70 COVID-positive inmates have been transferred to the COVID-19 Treatment Center at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center, 1 is being treated in the JTVCC infirmary, and 3 are being treated in stable condition in area hospitals. 48 SCI inmates who most recently tested positive are being held in isolation and will be moved to the SCI COVID-19 Treatment Center this week.

Currently across all correctional facilities, 22 DOC staff and 3 healthcare contractors have tested positive for COVID-19, while 87 DOC staff and healthcare contractors assigned to DOC facilities have recovered from the illness. No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates or staff members for privacy protection.

Review an informational chart of COVID-19 recoveries and cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility [by clicking HERE](#).

The DOC continues to employ a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any Level V prison, Level IV violation of probation or work release center, or Probation and Parole Office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.
- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. All Correctional Officers have been wearing face masks since April 10.
- **Face masks have been provided to every inmate at all Level V prison and Level IV work release and violation of probation facilities statewide, more than 4,300 in total.**

Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, have been transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19 and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.